

N.E. Miles ECDC College of Charleston

2018 Recertification Application
Nature Explore



Commitment

We are grateful for the opportunity to annually renew our *Nature Explore* certification, as the process helps us maintain focus on continued improvement. As a campus-based demonstration and laboratory program, we have a responsibility to model best practices in our community, including connecting children with the natural world. Our efforts focus on commitment to 3 “big ideas”

- ▶ Sustainability & ecological responsibility
- ▶ Loose parts play
- ▶ Collaborations within and external to our campus

The following slides share highlights of our work in 2017-18 on these ideas

Peace Project

The 4/5K children and teachers were discussing empathy and learning about people in history that demonstrated positive, caring attributes. They decided to invite the neighboring Title I school to visit, play outside together, and share in a “peace” project. This collaboration led to new relationships, friendly social interactions, acceptance, and culminated with a Peace Parade around the campus.



Peace Project

The Peace Project evolved to opening doors between our 2 and 3 year old classes too. The children invited the neighboring 3K class to visit and create art projects together to celebrate peace.



Play Day/Earth Day



We hosted a family event in April in honor of Earth Day and NAEYC's Week of the Young Child. Parents were invited to volunteer and assist with interactive stations around our outdoor space. The families explored these stations to learn about sustainability and recycled materials.



Play Day/Earth Day

We invited the college Office of Sustainability, Water Missions International, and the college's Garden Apprentice Program to share their expertise about the environment and share ways to take care of our Earth.



Routines

Routines and daily hands-on activities continue to be an enjoyment for our students. The children assist with taking care of the garden beds and help with daily maintenance. The campus grounds crew often visits to help the children learn about our plants around the playground.



Learning about habitats and animals around us

This year we had visits from a variety of community groups to learn about habitats and animals. The Bee Cause visited to teach us the importance of bees in pollination and ways to protect their habitats.



Learning about habitats and animals around us

The local pet shelter visited to discuss ways to help and advocate for those animals in need. Grice Marine Lab visited to help us learn about marine creatures that live in the salty waters around us.



Loose Parts

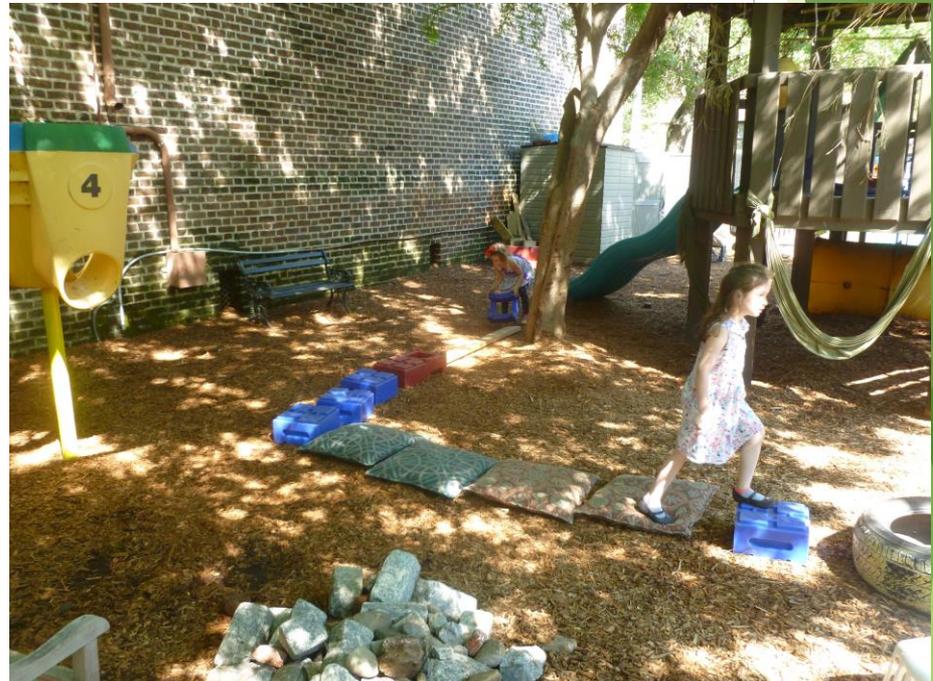


The children develop their imagination in child centered play all the time. They are able to explore a variety of loose parts including cardboard boxes, wood, pulleys, towel tubes, paper bags, fabric, and outdoor objects they discover on the playground or from our nature walks.



Loose Parts

The mud kitchen hosts many creative story telling opportunities in our outdoor classroom. The children spend time building elaborate obstacle courses to challenge one another.



The Garden



Gardening continues to be a focal point of outdoor life at ECDC. This year the 4/5 year old children voted to develop a fall vegetable garden and a spring butterfly garden. They tended the crops with the help of the teachers and graduate assistants each day. The children make ongoing discoveries and observations in the garden.

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The Garden

The 2's and 3's learned about insects that are helpful to the garden. They observed the transformation of a caterpillar to butterfly and released ladybugs into our garden. The children observed the insects and explored their interactions with the outside environment.



2017-18 Professional Development

Our lead staff delivered or participated in the following conferences to continue developing our role as advocates for outdoor education

- ▶ NAEYC Conference, November 2017
- ▶ Annual MEPI (Montessori) Conference, February, 2018
- ▶ U.S. Coalition on Play Annual Conference, Clemson University, April 2018
- ▶ 7th Early Childhood Summit @ College of Charleston, June 2018